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INDIAN DANCES IN "*THE TEMPEST*"

The relation of "The Tempest" to contemporary interest in American discovery and settlement was first suggested by Malone in his "Essay on the Chronological Order of Shakespeare's Plays," published in 1790. The surmise that the play may have been based upon "some particular and late misfortune at sea" Malone later confirmed by a pamphlet, "An Account of The Incidents from which The Title and Part of The Story of Shakespeare's Tempest were derived; and its True date Ascertained," published in 1808. In the advertisement the author states that he had conceived the discovery his own until the publication of Douce's "Illustrations of Shakespeare" "within these few days," in which the editor had pointed out the value of the Jourdan and Strachey pamphlets not only for determining the date of "The Tempest" but also as having suggested material for the play. Malone in this last pamphlet (reprinted in Boswell's Malone, 1821) names fourteen publications dating from 1602-1612, of which Boswell reprints thirteen, and states that he believes the list far from complete. In his discussion on the relation of "The Tempest" to these accounts of voyages, the author first makes the details of the famous wreck of the ship of Sir George Somers and Sir Thomas Gates clear, by quoting freely from Stith's "History of the first discovery and settlement of Virginia." Then for particular details to compare with "The Tempest" he quotes from the "True Declaration" issued by the Council, 1609-10, and from Jourdan's pamphlet, 1610, pointing out correspondences both in incident and in details of the setting. Strangely enough, he omits discussion of Strachey's "True Repertory" or letter of July 15, 1610. Although he does not quote from the Rosier pamphlet, he emphasizes the interest of the Earl of Southampton in voyages of discovery and settlement, the expedition under Captain George Weymouth, fitted out by Southampton and Lord Arundel and the interest of Southampton in the new charter of 1609, leading to the expedition under Somers and Gates. Of the pamphlets of 1612, Malone makes no use; for he had "certain knowledge" of the existence of "The Tempest" in

1611. Although Malone's work has since been proved not wholly accurate, his conclusions have been on the whole accepted.

Other early editors,¹ Theobald, Warburton, Johnson, Capell, Farmer, and Steevens used the pamphlets to explain certain allusions in the play, but they did not see that "The Tempest" had been based directly on Elizabethan interest in this voyage, reflected in conversation and printed pamphlets.

Furness in the Variorum edition of "The Tempest," 1892, summarized Malone's results and quoted freely from the Jourdan narrative. He suggested that if we could push the date of "The Tempest" on to 1613, the earliest date for which we have positive evidence, we could include a Strachey pamphlet of 1612, the identity of which he left confused. Furness then mentioned the possible acquaintanceship of Strachey and Shakespeare, surmised by Meissner from the fact that Strachey had written some poetry and that his pamphlet on "The Colony in Virginea Brittania" was issued "From my lodging in the blacke Friers."

The first real addition to Malone's discussion of the subject was made by Mr. Luce in the appendix to the Arden edition of "The Tempest", 1906. Mr. Luce has simplified the matter by giving a fairly complete list of pamphlets on American discovery, issued from 1608-1613, discussing the most significant at some length. He has also cleared away the confusion in regard to the various Strachey manuscripts and publications. In this summary Mr. Luce notices particularly: The Despatch sent by De la Warre in charge of Gates July 15, 1610; Strachey's Letter or "Repertory" written to some 'excellent lady' in England and probably carried by the same ship; Jourdan's, "A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Ile of Devils," written soon after the author landed in England; and "A True Declaration of the estate of the Colonies in Virginia Published by Advice and direction of the Councell of Virginia, 1610." From the last three accounts, Mr. Luce has cited a large number of parallelisms, both in thought and phrasing, between the pamphlets and the play, the cumulative evidence of which is rea-

¹ Furness Variorum Ed. p. 308.

sonably convincing that Shakespeare based "The Tempest" in part on contemporary accounts of travel.

Mr. Luce, however, in his very thorough summary of the pamphlets related to "The Tempest", does not consider Shakespeare's possible indebtedness to these pamphlets for descriptions of the Indian dances, which may have furnished suggestive material for portions of the masque element of the play. In enumerating the various publications, Mr. Luce begins with those of 1608, thereby omitting the account of the Weymouth expedition fitted out by the Earl of Southampton and Lord Arundel, published in 1605. To this Shakespeare, on account of his friendship for Southampton, would naturally be attracted and from it the practical craftsman may have gleaned a bare suggestion for the strange burden of Ariel's Song, Act I, Sc. 2, which in the 1623 Folio reads:

Come unto these yellow sands,
and then take hands:
Curtsied when you have and kist
the wilde waves whist;
Foote it feately heere, and there, and sweete
sprights beare the burthen. **BURTHEN DISPERSEDLY**
Harke, harke, bowgh wawgh; the watch-dogges
barke, bowgh-wawgh.

Ar. Hark, hark, I heare, the straine of
strutting chanticlere cry cockadidle-dowe.

The pamphlet thus describes an Indian dance on the shore:
"Griffin which lay on Shoare, reported unto me their manner, and (as I may tearme them) the ceremonies of their Idolatry, which they perform thus. One among them (the eldest of the company as he judged) riseth right up, the rest sitting still, and *so sodainely cryed, Bowh, waugh*; then the women fall downe, and lye upon the ground, and the men altogether answering the same, fall a stamping round about with both feet as hard as they can, making the ground shake, with sundry loud outcries and change of voice and sound."²

Indian music and dances are among the features of Indian life most enthusiastically described in the accounts and may easily have caught Shakespeare's attention.

In the Strachey publication of 1612, "The Proceedings of

² Purchas, his Pilgrims (Glasgow 1906) Vol. XVIII, p. 344.

the English Colony in Virginea taken faithfully out of the writings of Thomas Studly Cape-Merchant, Anas Todkill, Doctor Russell, Nathaniel Powell; and since enlarged out of the Writings of Captain John Smith” we find a complete description of a dance given by the women of Powhatan’s camp before Captain John Smith, which again may have furnished a basis for the strange “living Drolierie” which contributes to the pageantry of “The Tempest” in Act III, Sc. 3. To this supposition there is of course the obstacle of the uncertainty of the date of “The Tempest”. If the list of plays in the famous Cunningham Account Books of the Revels Office for the years 1604-5 and 1611-12 are forgeries, then there is no necessity for dating “The Tempest” earlier than 1613, and Shakespeare may easily have seen the 1612 volume edited by Strachey. If, however, we accept Mr. Law’s apparently sound argument,³ proving the authenticity of the Cunningham manuscripts, we cannot date “The Tempest” later than October 31, 1611. In that case, nevertheless, the playwright may earlier have seen the individual accounts which Strachey compiled for the volume of 1612. Mr. Luce, emphasizing the fact that Strachey posed as general editor, says: “A note ‘To the Reader’ informs us that the various narratives mostly by ‘Souldiers’ chanced ‘into my hands’ to publish it. ‘T. Abbay’ ”. Purchas in a marginal note on his material says: “I have many written Treatises lying by me written by Capt. Smith and others, some there, some here after there returne, but because these have alreadie seene the light and containe a full relation of Virginian affaires, I was loth to wearie the Reader with others of this time.” It seems fairly probable then, that Shakespear before writing “The Tempest” may have seen either “The Proceedings” or some of the separate accounts of which the volume was composed.

The description of the dance mentioned is in “The Proceedings” and reprinted in “Purchas, his Pilgrims”⁴ and reads as follows:

“In a faire plaine field they made a fire, before which he

³ Law, *Some supposed Shakespeare Forgeries*, London, 1911.

⁴ Purchas, *his Pilgrims* (Glasgow 1906) Vol. XVIII, p. 496.

sitting upon a mat; suddenly amongst the woods was heard such a hideous noise and shriking that they betooke them to their armes, supposing Powhatan with all his power came to surprise them; but the beholders which were many, men, women, and children, satisfied the captaine there was no such matter, being presently presented with this *anticke*, thirty yong women came naked out of the woods (only covered behinde and before with a few greene leaves) their bodies all painted, some white, some red, some blacke, some party colour, but every one different, their leader had a faire paire of Stagges hornes on her head and another Skinne at her girdle, another at her arme, a quiver of Arrowes in her hand, the next in her hand a Sword, another a Clubbe, another a Pot-sticke, all horned alike, the rest every one with their several devices. These fiends with most hellish cries and shouts rushing from amongst the trees cast themselves in a ring about the fire, singing and dancing with excellent ill variety, oft falling into their infernall passions and then solemnly againe to sing and dance. Having spent neere an houre in this *Maskarado*, as they *entred*, in like manner they *departed*. Having *reaccommodated themselves*, they solemnly invited Smith to their lodging, but no sooner was hee within the house, but these Nimphes more tormented him than ever most tediously crying, Love you not mee? *This salutation ended, the feast was set*, consisting of Fruite in Baskets, Fish and Flesh in wooden Platters, Beans and Pease there wanted not (for twenty Hogges) nor any savage daintie which their invention could devise *some attending, others singing and dancing about them; this mirth and banquet being ended* with Firebrands (instead of Torchis) they conducted him to his lodging."

This strange and grotesque dance, which the author calls 'this Anticke,' 'this maskarado' would have delighted an Elizabethan audience and might well have been one of the features of "The Tempest" which called forth the well-known censure of Ben Jonson in the Induction to "Bartholomew Fair," 1614. The elements of the masque (Act III, Sc. 3) which makes one suspect a relationship between it and the pamphlet are: the strange musicke, the several

strange shapes, the Banket, the gentle actions of salutation inviting the King to eate. The fact that the Shapes enter, dance, depart and re-enter as they did in the Indian dance also seems significant. The conversation following the dumb show seems further to suggest that Shakespeare thought of the masque as a phenomenon of beyond sea.

Alo. Give us kind keepers; what were these?

Seb. A living Drolerie; now I will beleeeve
That there are Unicornes; that in Arabia
There is one Tree, the Phoenix throne, one Phoenix
At this houre reigning there.

Ant. Ile beleeeve both:
And what do's else want credit, come to me
And Ile besworne 'tis true: Travelers nere did lye
Though fooles at home condemne 'em.

Gon. If in Naples
I should report this now, would they beleeeve me?
If I should say I saw such Islands;
(For certes, these are people of the Island)
Who though they are of monstrous shape yet note
Their manners are more gentle, kinde, then of
Our humane generation you will find
Many, nay almost any.

The two following masques in Act IV are much more conventional, introducing the classic and pastoral elements found in "Cymbeline" and "The Winter's Tale." This one is quite different and on the whole far more congruous with the wonders of the Inchaned Isle beyond the seas.

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